

**REPORT
ON THE GREEK NOMINATION
FOR THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF
CULTURE 2006**

**Issued by
The Selection Panel for the European Capital of
Culture 2006**

This report was written by the selection panel for the European Capital of Culture 2006 on the basis of meetings held on 3rd September 2002 in Brussels and 21st September in Patras, Greece. The report is addressed to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission.

Background

The European Capitals of Culture scheme is a way of bringing together people involved in culture from the European Union and other European countries. The objective is to highlight the richness and diversity of European cultures and the features they share, as well as to promote greater mutual acquaintance between European citizens.

The scheme was launched in 1985 by the Council of Ministers on the initiative of Mrs. Melina Mercouri. Since then, the event has grown in popularity every year and is now well known to European citizens. For each year from 1985 until 2005 at least one European city has been awarded the title of European City/Capital of Culture. In 2000, as a tribute to the new millennium, a total of 9 European Capitals of Culture were designated.

Until 2004, the European Capitals of Culture have been designated by the Council. Decision 1418/1999/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council established a Community action for the European Capital of Culture event for the years 2005 to 2019. By this decision, a new nomination procedure was installed. Each year, one city of a Member State shall be designated as European Capital of Culture, in turn, following the list annexed to the decision. The new procedure was applied for the first time for the designation of Cork as the European Capital of Culture 2005.

For the years 2005 onwards, the *nomination procedure* is as follows:

- The national authorities of the relevant country nominate one or several cities. The nomination(s) are notified to the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission and the Committee of the Regions by the Member state concerned four years before the event is due to begin.
- A selection panel issues a report on the nomination(s) judged against the objectives and criteria specified in the decision. The report is forwarded to the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission.
- The European Parliament may forward an opinion on the nomination(s) within three months after the receipt of the report.
- The Commission gives a recommendation on the designation of the Capital of Culture to the Council. The recommendation takes the opinion of the Parliament and the selection panel's report into consideration.

- The Council officially designates one of the cities as the European Capital of Culture.

The *selection panel* is composed of seven people of whom two shall be appointed by the European Parliament, two by the Council, two by the Commission and one by the Committee of the Regions.

The selection panel appointed for the selection procedure for the European Capital of Culture 2006

The members of the selection panel formed to judge the Greek nomination for 2006 were appointed as described in the decision 1419. The following members were appointed:

By E/1119/2002 – C (2002)2279, the Commission appointed Marie-Claude Beaud and Robert Palmer on the 26th June 2002.

The Council approved the two Council appointed members, Mr Frédéric Flamand and Ms Camilla Lundberg, the 5th November 2001. The two candidates had been nominated by the Belgian and the Swedish Council presidencies, in accordance with the Council Decision of 17 December 1999 on appointment by the Council of the members of the selection panel for the ‘European Capital of Culture’ Community action (2000/C 9/01).

The Parliament selected two members, Mr Olaf Schwencke and Mr Gottfried Wagner in the Conference of Presidents in its meeting of the 6th June 2002. The Parliament also appointed two substitutes, Mr Olaf Zimmermann and Mr Daniel Vernet. The Commission was informed of the appointed members by the letter of the 18th June 2002 from President Pat Cox to President Romano Prodi.

The Committee of the Regions presented their appointed member, Mr Henning Jensen, by their letter of the 22nd April 2002 from President Albert Bore to Commissioner Viviane Reding.

The members of the panel received the applications from the cities by the letter of the 3rd July 2002 from the Commission.

The Commission has presented a set of *rules of procedure* for the selection panel, taking into account that a further specification of the panel’s work as described in the decision is required.

The candidate for 2006

The Greek nomination of the city of Patras as the European Capital of Culture 2006 was presented to Commissioner Viviane Reding by letter of the 28th June 2001 from the Greek Minister of Culture Evangelos Venizelos. The candidacy file for Patras was presented to the Commission by letter of the 28th December 2001 from Mr Evangelos Iak. Floratos, Mayor of Patras.

Meetings of the selection panel in Brussels, the 3rd September and in Patras, 21 September 2002

On the initiative of the Commission, the panel members were invited to a meeting on the 3rd September 2002 in Brussels.

The agenda of the meeting was as follows:

1. Introduction by Mr Antonios Kosmopoulos, Head of Unit, the Commission – Directorate General for Education and Culture
2. Appointment of the chairman of the panel.
3. Presentation by Patras.
4. Deliberations (closed discussion).

Robert Palmer, Marie-Claude Beaud, Gottfried Wagner, Olaf Schwencke and Camilla Lundberg were present from the Panel. The following were present from the Commission: Antonios Kosmopoulos (Head of Unit), Brit Holtebekk (the Cultural Unit), Susie Jones (the Cultural Unit).

Robert Palmer was nominated chairman and conducted the meeting. Representatives from Patras gave a presentation of the bid.

During the preliminary discussions, several questions of general interest concerning Decision no 1419/1999 and the future of the European Capital of Culture event were raised. The Panel decided to outline these concerns in the report.

The Panel discussed in detail Patras' candidature with regards to the selection criteria listed in the Decision no 1419/1999. However, the Panel found it difficult to make the required evaluation on the presented documentation, and therefore requested a visit Patras for the weekend of 21-22 September.

The Panel's visit to Patras was organised by the Commission, and the views of the Panel take into account their experience during the visit. The programme, which was determined by the city of Patras, is attached to this report. The panel members Robert Palmer, Marie-Claude Beaud, Gottfried Wagner, Olaf Schwencke and Camilla Lundberg took part in the visit. They were assisted by Commission officials Antonios Kosmopoulos and Brit Holtebekk. The concluding meeting of the Panel took place at the end of the visit.

Short presentation of the candidate city

Patras has a total of 170 000 inhabitants and is the third largest city in Greece.

The current cultural activity of the city includes the Patras International Festival (various artistic activities, mainly in the field of music), the Patras Carnival and the Poetry Symposium. The city hosts several conservatoires and schools of music, including one devoted exclusively to Byzantine music, and several orchestras and choirs. There is one full-time theatre group in the city, the Patras Municipal Regional Theatre, as well as several amateur groups. A number of schools teach dancing, and there are plans to set up a dance theatre within the context of the Patras Municipal Regional Theatre. Patras has a visual arts workshop, a school of icon painting and a carnival float workshop, and hosts a Municipal Gallery as well as private art galleries. The city has a Municipal Library, an archaeological museum, a folk art museum, an historical and ethnological museum and a museum of the press. The architectural heritage of the city is dominated by neo-classicism, but includes also constructions from other periods.

The proposal focuses on two central ideas: “bridges” and “dialogues”. Cultural managers from Patras and the general public will be involved in developing these ideas. Further, four poles/programmes of cultural attraction will be developed. The first, “A city for Europe”, will relate to the architectural heritage, the industrial revolution and similar subjects. “The counterpart cities” programme will be developed in the fields of human and social sciences and in diverse artistic fields. “The three sea battles” will present a cultural programme focusing on peace and understanding. The last theme, “The many homelands”, is directly linked to the etymology of the name of the city. This programme will amongst other things concentrate on art workshops, the transfer of know-how, way of life and entertainment.

In terms of administration, a committee of public figures and a working party headed by the Mayor have already been appointed in cooperation with the Greek Ministry of Culture. According to the submission, a general plan of action for Patras 2006 had been presented at the end of 2001. As for the further development of the infrastructure of the city, a master plan is available. Patras wishes to establish an agency to manage the European Capital of Culture 2006 as a non-profit organisation. Patras takes part in several European networks that support their candidature.

The budget for the cultural programme for Patras European Capital of Culture 2006 is estimated at 36 million €. In addition, 100 million € has been budgeted for investments in infrastructure and 4 million € for marketing/promotion. These costs will mainly be covered by the Greek Ministry of Culture, who have already agreed its support. Patras also expects income from entrance charges and sales, sponsorships and the European Union.

The panel's judgement

General remarks on the selection procedure

The Panel had considerable difficulty in understanding its precise role in the selection procedure for European Capitals of Culture, and in particular the relevance of its views when only one candidate city is to be considered by the European Institutions and the selection panel. This was the first selection panel, which has been asked to comment on the candidacy of only one city as Cultural Capital of Europe, this city having the full support of the member state that was responsible for the nomination. The Panel was of the view that in such a situation its role could only but be marginal and without influence, and was aware of the potential difficulties if the Panel's recommendation was negative. These problems call into question the system of selection panels. If the political authority responsible in that year for the nomination has already chosen one single candidate city, the role of a selection panel of independent experts seems superfluous.

Furthermore, the vagueness of the selection criteria, combined with the lack of guidance offered to nominated cities in terms of the level of detail to be submitted in their proposals, created substantial problems for the Panel in arriving at firm conclusions.

On reflecting on the current programme of European Capitals of Culture as set out in Decision 1418/1999/EC, and in relation to the submission by the city of Patras and possibly future nominated cities as well, the Panel expressed concern that the impact and the significance of the title "European Capital of Culture" is likely to be diminished or the meaning genuinely changed when cities are designated, which have cultural positions that are peripheral and that have under-developed cultural infrastructure. If the designation is mainly to be a tool for local or regional development, then the term "Capital of Culture" in a European sense becomes meaningless, except as a device for city marketing. Clearly, there is a gap between the expectations evoked by the term "European Capital" and the actual realisation of the event that certain cities may achieve.

The Panel was of the view that most cities that embark on planned cultural development could make a significant contribution to cultural life on a local, regional and perhaps on a national basis, although the term "European Capital" should not apply. Other schemes that help promote local and regional cultural development may be created with good reason, but a city deserving of the title "European Capital of Culture" should demonstrate clearly how this event will be of significance and have impact across Europe and make an important contribution to the development of European cultural cooperation, programmes, issues and thinking. The question of European significance can be evaluated in relation to the city's past, present and potential future role in artistic and cultural innovation and its likely influence on shaping European cultures. An assessment of the potential impact of a city's cultural programme on a European scale, as reflected in the evaluation criteria, and when compared to other cities, should form an important basis for selection.

The Panel also wished draw attention to issues raised by the forthcoming enlargement of the European Union. Cities of the new member states may be interesting candidates for the European Capital of Culture. However, following the Decision 1419/1999, these new member countries will not be in a position to present a candidature before 2020 at the earliest.

In view of these concerns, the Panel therefore urges the European institutions to reconsider the relevant aspects of Decision 1419/1999, as soon as possible, to review the current selection procedures and criteria, to take measures to protect the continuing reputation and meaning of the European Capital of Culture programme, and to alter the scheme in order to reflect changing circumstances in Europe.

Having regard to these concerns, the Panel nevertheless attempted to evaluate the proposals submitted by the city of Patras.

Evaluation of the Candidate City

The Panel based its judgement on the criteria outlined in Article 3 of the Decision 1419/1999. This article states that the nominations shall include a cultural project of European dimension, based principally on cultural co-operation, in accordance with the objectives and action provided for by Article 151 of the Treaty. The further specifications of Article 3 as well as the criteria mentioned in annex II of the Decision were fully taken into account fully by the Panel during the meeting.

The criteria are attached to the report.

The Panel agreed that the project as presented by Patras, to which the city stated it was committed, appeared ambitious in terms of financing, organisation and infrastructure development, although the absence of detail made it impossible for the Panel to substantiate the city's intentions. The apparent level of political as well as financial support on a local and national level appeared strong. The event also seemed to fit into a long-term perspective and development plans for the city. The designation of Patras as an associated city for the Olympic games in 2004 will mean that certain new infrastructure will be in place by that time, and is an opportunity for the city to pilot certain approaches and projects and to communicate its intentions for 2006. The list of new cultural and non-cultural infrastructure projects to be built in Patras by 2006 was impressive, although no assessment could be made of the realism of achieving these plans.

The Panel considered that the city's aspiration to become a model city as a smaller size Capital of Culture was worthy, and noted that the city claimed that its ambitions were realistic in relation to the timescale and available resources. In terms of tourism, the city's intention to exploit the potential of large numbers of visitors now arriving at the port as a gateway to this region seemed credible.

During their visit to Patras the Panel witnessed the commitment of the city's cultural department, local cultural operators and others to the proposed designation of Patras as European Capital of Culture. There appeared to be a high degree of mobilisation of

local participation of the Patras community in cultural projects, especially in the amateur sector, and local support networks for certain cultural activities seemed strong. In artistic terms, the Panel recognised the potential of developing certain cultural traditions of particular significance in Patras, such as the carnival and the shadow theatre, and extending the valuable educational work, such as that taking place in the Old Municipal Hospital.

The geographical position of Patras presents important opportunities in terms of regional and, in some respects, international cultural cooperation. The Panel believed that more focus should be given to realise this potential in terms of special projects and programmes.

The Panel viewed preliminary plans for marketing and communications in the lead up to 2006, and the use of valuable opportunities that would arise related to the Olympic Games in 2004.

However, in arriving at its views, the Panel found the documentation and presentation of the cultural programmes and plans for the European Capital of Culture 2006 significantly lacking in detail and therefore difficult to evaluate. From the evidence presented, the Panel was unable to discern a cultural ambition of European scale and significance for the event. Although lists of possible projects were presented, the Panel was not convinced that there was a coherent artistic vision in place, and believed that this lack may call into question the European and international credibility of the programme in cultural terms.

Patras, as a relatively small city in terms of population, currently lacks certain key facilities and spaces to host significant and large-scale cultural programmes, although the city has plans for major infrastructure projects. The Panel were impressed with these plans, which the city claims will be completed by 2006.

At this stage, the plans for the cultural programme for 2006 focus largely on cultural heritage and history and on activities which encourage participation of local citizens, and inadequately on artistic creation and contemporary culture. The Panel believed that in terms of the criteria established for a European Capital of Culture, this problem should be addressed, and that the programme as outlined should be strengthened substantially in this regard.

The Panel was also concerned that young people may be under-represented in the plans, and saw little evidence of cultural interests of the young in the proposed programme, nor of the presence of specific projects, which relate to new cultural forms, such as new creative technologies, new media and cross-disciplinary work. Collaboration with the advanced technology initiatives of the university (for example, the media lab) is a potential area of development, but such projects should involve and create opportunities for professional artists and professional cultural organisations.

Although the city is well-endowed with amateur and student cultural organisations and associations (in theatre, music, folk dance, film, visual arts, carnival, etc.), there is little evidence of a well developed creative infrastructure of professional artists, cultural managers, and professional producing and promoting organisations that have

appropriate experience of developing and managing cultural programmes on a European or international scale, nor experienced artistic advisers and cultural operators, who might be able to stimulate new approaches to creativity, cultural strategy and planning, and artistic collaborations with the city and with European partners.

The Panel comprised experts in most artistic sectors and they viewed the programme proposals that were presented as lacking in stature and adventure.

Although the organisers had decided certain themes, the Panel felt that they were not linked coherently to the projects. For example, the main theme of “bridges” and “dialogues” remains substantially underdeveloped.

The proposed programme was viewed as having primarily a local orientation; the international aspects were vague and lacking in concrete plans. Although the city takes part in several international networks that supported Patras’ candidature for the European Capital of Culture with formal resolutions, few interesting projects arising from this co-operation were presented to the Panel. Such cooperation should become more than a political gesture, and this will necessitate close collaboration between cultural organisations and artists, and should be developed to ensure that it can be sustained in the longer-term.

The budget, as presented, did not offer a sufficient level of detail, and in the absence of any clear programme, could not be evaluated.

Conclusions

Notwithstanding the efforts of the city of Patras in developing proposals and presenting arguments for its candidature as European Capital of Culture 2006, the city’s plans do not meet several of the established criteria as set out in decision 1418/1999/EC of the European Parliament and the Council. In particular, the proposals of Patras do not demonstrate clearly a “cultural project of European dimension”, and certain other objectives as set out in Article 3 of the decision have not been clearly addressed with sufficient clarity.

This conclusion created a dilemma for the Panel when attempting to arrive at a firm recommendation. This problem was compounded by the absence of any alternative candidate city, and the weakness of the selection process, as described earlier in this report.

After its deliberations, the Panel’s view is that the city of Patras may be capable of organising important events for 2006, but only if the city is able to address certain critical weaknesses that have been outlined in this report. The Panel strongly advises that any designation of Patras as the European Capital of Culture 2006 be conditional on improvements to the initial proposals, and the Panel’s suggestions are indicated below. After meeting such conditions, Patras may have the capacity to achieve a different model as a cultural city. The Panel’s suggestions are as follows:

- that the city recruits an experienced Director and other managers for the event that have the ability to help the city develop a coherent cultural vision for the programme, and who have substantial international experience of organising large-scale cultural projects on a European scale.
- that the city focuses its efforts and resources on a manageable number of important projects of international quality
- that the city takes steps to ensure that several of the cultural projects are clearly of European significance
- that the city develops and implements strategic plans to develop its creative and managerial capabilities to ensure the implementation and sustainability of its cultural projects and programmes for 2006

The Panel's Recommendation

On the basis of an overall evaluation of the application, the Panel advises the Institutions of the European Union that if Patras is to be designated as European Cultural Capital 2006, the designation should be subject to certain conditions as proposed in the report.

Furthermore, the Panel asks the Institutions of the European Union to consider the Panel's concerns in relation to the nomination and selection of future European Capitals of Culture and to develop and agree proposals for new procedures.

Ms Camilla Lundberg
(Council designation)

Mr Gottfried Wagner
(Parliament designation)

Ms Marie-Claude Beaud
(Commission designation)

Mr Robert Palmer
(Commission designation)

Mr Olaf Schwencke
(Parliament designation)

Excused :

Mr Frédéric Flamand
(Council designation)

Mr Henning Jensen
(Committee of Regions designation)